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THE MONTH

DECEMBER 1960

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THE FOND DESIRE

A Meditation for Christmas

By

CLARE DAWSON

IT IS MID-DECEMBER. For some weeks past the question "What do you want for Christmas?" has been tossed to and fro like a shuttlecock, and even if we feel the Christmas present idea has got into the hands of the shopkeepers, and been artificially blown up into a sort of tyranny, still there is something in the question.

What we want discloses what we are, and while superficial wants may be a clue to individual character a common desire, if it exists, points to something constant in human nature, and to a goal that does not change. Latent desire is a capacity for going out towards a good perceived, but it would never be pricked into activity if the good were non-existent, and a persistent hankering after anything is a sure sign that it exists.

Is there any common desire, anything so desperately necessary to humanity that a man will sell all that he has and go gladly in rags hugging his one treasure? The gospels say there is, but leaving faith aside for a moment, what has human experience to say on the matter?

It need not say a lot. We are not thinking here of the daring leap of great minds towards truths that are beyond reason, or of the pinnacles of human thought where such a man as Aristotle reaches after the vision of God in the idea of complete happiness in the contemplation of perfect truth. We are thinking rather of common, and inescapable, human wishing and wanting, ending always on a note of dissatisfaction, a sense of incompleteness, of disappointment; a discontent, not always recognised as a heavenly gift.

Whatever men may be said to want it must include the notion of life, for to live more fully, to become more truly what we are is at the root of every want in human beings. We know, or, if we refuse to think of it directly, we are vaguely and perhaps uneasily aware, that human happiness is never self-sufficient.

God alone has fruition in His very being, and creatures are essentially dependent, seeking completion in a good outside themselves. This constant seeking is evidence of a sort of natural hopefulness, not purely rational but rather organic, and coterminous with existence, for however weird a form pursuit of happiness may take there is no proof that it stops until the moment of death. The seeming standstill of desire in extreme illness, or depressive madness, may be a defence mechanism, and even suicide is a misdirected attempt to improve an intolerable situation.

Every fear is said to be the fear of death, and every lessening of natural hope sends life on a downward curve, but natural hopefulness in human beings, with its thrust towards immortality, makes for a stronger life-drive than lower animals possess. We might expect that it would be the other way about, and that hope of a future life would make men more readily let go their hold on this life of trials and disappointments, but it does not work out like that. Neither rational conviction that death is not the end of a person, nor the supernatural expectation of the life of the world to come, lead to contempt for present existence, or a morbid longing to be done with it, in spite of some of the things holy men have written on the subject. It is true that Christian teaching declares the next life to be in all ways better than this one, (or worse if we consistently choose amiss), but it insists on the continuity between here and there, between natural life, in its condition of mortality, and the eternal life received at baptism but confirmed in us only after final judgment.

The natural fear of death is not a shrinking from the judgment of God, but a horror at the unnatural separation of soul and body from which we know there can be no escape. Once born we are committed to a running warfare with death, but if life were not worth having nothing and nobody would fight for it. The persistent instinct to fight for life in this world seems to be a correlative rather than a denial of the hope of future life, for if the life we now have is under-valued why should we want to live forever, even with improved conditions?

Of the goods of this world most people would agree, I think, that the greatest is friendship. Real loneliness is terrifying. On the other hand, just because it is so precious, friendship would be shot through with such complete tragedy that we might fear to

embark on it if there were no hope of immortality. Our friends die. That is our introduction to death. Its icy fingers force a way into our hearts when they pluck off the life of someone we love; and that is just where nature staggers, and the natural hope of immortality trembles into an awful question. They are gone from our sight, from our touch, from our human ways—is it forever? We need assurance then, most desperately, but who is to assure us? Something of the loneliness of death takes possession of our own souls, chills the warm blood in us, and forces the recognition that life as we know it must end.

We may despise, and reject as a racket, the seance and the table-rapping of the spiritualist, but we ought to have an answer that really takes into account the stark fact of death, as well as the hunger for life, for at first sight they flatly contradict each other. Reason does give us an answer, and a hope, but except for the very brave, or the totally insensitive, such a hope shrivels in the bitter dark of mourning. It may persist, like a tiny flickering flame, too small to be blown out in a great wind, but dare we acknowledge it? If we look closer will it not die out altogether and leave us alone in the dark? We can say as firmly as our trembling lips allow that men do not consistently desire the utterly unattainable, and remind ourselves that every desire points to a reality that certainly exists, even if not within immediate reach, but that is not much comfort when one's friend is dead. Death drastically assaults our living senses, in the dead body seen, the coffin closed, and the rather horrible trappings of funerals. It all seems so desperately final. Only an ultimate word can reassure us, a simple word that we can understand, but it must have the stamp of absolute truth. Deception here would be unendurable.

To look at the problem from another angle, is there not something revivifying about every birth? We need not be sentimentalists to feel at the news of a birth a faint stir, as if the sap rose in our animal-vegetable being. Birth, after all, is not a wholly private and individual affair. It is also a guarantee of the continuance of our race. One of the reasons put forward by psychologists to account for the increase in nervous and psychological illness in the modern world is that a harsh and overbearing rationalism has been allowed to imprison or suffocate natural instincts. It is an abuse of reason to make its reign despotic, and it proceeds from and leads to misunderstanding of human nature

as a whole. A man is not an institution where different departments can keep themselves to themselves, barely acknowledging each other's existence. We may be thankful that there are still natural events that pierce our rational defences, and that in spite of cheap cynicism, or assumed indifference, newborn life provokes the flicker of an emotion we should not care to be without. It is extremely doubtful if any of us would really like a sterile world, where nothing was born, and no new, young, tiresome creatures brought vigour and gaiety to mankind's winter. There is still excitement in the words "A child is born," for every birth is a replenishment: and a birth is what God gives us. A birth is His answer to death, His one word of assurance and hope.

By the time we get to midnight Mass the last echo of "What do you want for Christmas?" will have died away. The hour for present-giving has come. But—why? What does Christmas amount to really? We know the story so well; the little town crowded with involuntary home-comers, the inn-keeper tired and bothered (hoping to make a pretty penny out of it all the same), the rich taking the best beds, and the poor lying wherever they can find shelter. What a place for a child to be born! But they got sorted out somehow, and the babble and bustle died down into silence, and there, in the stable, with only the beasts and the Holy Ones to hear, God's Word from eternity was spoken in human flesh. We are less innocent than beasts. Our ears must be opened by God or we cannot hear in the wail of an infant the promise of immortality.

This birth is our hope. It catches up natural longings that we had feared to voice, the painful strivings of human reason, and its falling back in uncertainty before the closed door of death. This Word does not make itself heard by shouting above the tumult, but it rings through the very heart of created being like a sudden tremor of uncreated bliss. The world just isn't the same any more. It has yielded its increase. Something has happened to every tree, every stick and stone, every muddy, iced-over puddle. The material world always belonged to God, but now it is caught up, all of it, summed up in human flesh, into the life of God, who enters into time and space as a conqueror, that He may give back to men the life that Adam put in bondage.

No more sulking in corners and pretending we do not want it! No more cynical fear that the truth is too good to be true!

Christmas with its singing angels and swirling stars, its bemused shepherds running down the hillside, and strange kings riding into Jerusalem, leads straight to Easter. In a sense it contains Easter, and the ascension, and the last coming of Christ is mirrored in the first. We could sing over the crib, as well as outside the sepulchre where the grave-clothes lie discarded: This night the bonds of death are destroyed.

Life is the ground of all our wanting, for we cannot begin to want till we exist, but what we want, once desire gets going, is always more than scattered and incidental goods. We want life complete and whole, a simultaneous possession of all goods in one, a happiness that is indestructible and never to be snatched away. And that begins at Christmas.

The tiny child, with the puckered baby's face, the hands that curl like shavings, or stick out stiff and straight like little bits of rosy wood, is the ultimate Word spoken to the world. All nature must hear it, and only man has power to refuse to listen; but if he refuses his own nature will turn and betray him for denying it the life it longs to possess. "Good is what all desire" may seem a cool scholastic phrase, but how burningly real it becomes when the Good of all creation is defined, compassed as it were, in the small space of the manger.

It is not an increase of piety that is offered to us at Bethlehem, nor even the ability to become pattern men and women. It is more. It is the redemption of everything man can do, everything he can love, everything that makes human life worth living.

Christmas night is alive with springtide vitality. Through Mary's fearless acceptance of divine motherhood God's life has been welling into the world of created beings, renewing and revitalising everything. It has been silent as a seed in the furrow, but now it flowers; now we see the life of God manifest in the flesh. God, the eternal, becomes man in time.

Are we going to leave it at that? It would be enough certainly, for human imagination, in its wildest flight, never rose to such a crescendo, nor dreamt of such consummation of desire. But the depth of man's longing for immortality, for a happiness free from the depredations of death, was always pointing unconsciously to this day.

The Hebrews in the strength of God's promise, and the ancient peoples of the world by a sort of divine instinct, an uncovenanted

grace of the Spirit, looked for a saviour. They had confused ideas about what he was going to do, but what did they really want him to do if not to bestow on them everlasting happiness? Philosophers had told them they were naturally immortal as spirits; yes, but men are not just spirits, and they want more than a vague spiritual immortality. *Human* immortality has to extend to every delicate nerve and fibre. The whole man must live, or the life everlasting promised at baptism would be too strange to be desirable.

Romans and Greeks looked for a golden age, even if they pictured it as a glorified edition of life as we know it, but neither the material heavens of the Gods, nor the beautiful but inhuman speculations of philosophers about spiritual survival, rouse much enthusiasm for the life of the world to come. Perhaps they never dared to formulate the desire for a better kind of life, fuller and more perfect, as well as secure from death and disaster.

The Jews were convinced of personal immortality, though some of the expressions they used about it were a little cagey. Their desire to be caught to Abraham's bosom, or to be gathered to their fathers after death, is perhaps more evident than any overwhelming joy at the prospect of being face to face with Yahwe, but this may have been a very natural attempt to bridge the frightening gap between life here experienced and the unknown life beyond the grave. We all fear the unknown, and human beings cannot get over their reluctance to let death take away the dear familiar body, and the friendliness of human company. It may be grand to be numbered with the elect, but not very homely. And yet desire for immortality persists, and God has pledged Himself to its fulfilment. That is what He is doing there in the manger. He is redeeming His pledge, gently breaking down our fears, and, assuring us that we shall feel at home in His eternity. The old natural fear of supernatural power dies here: from to-day the fear of God must be converted into the tenderer and more delicate fear that springs from love.

This opening up of human life, this wonder of God made man that men may be lifted to God in friendship, is too great a theme for mortal tongues. Angels can sing of it, but men can only stammer like children before the Child who belongs to us all. The secret is out now, and we *know*, even if the knowledge is so rare and bright that it blinds and staggers us. Not in vain are the

spun-glass balls on the Christmas tree, the glittering tinsel, and the wrapped gifts; not in vain our hideous plaster cribs, with a handful of dusty straw, chipped angels, and a most unnatural Baby. These are our tokens that "something is too large for sight, and something much too plain to say."

Only a Seer could write: "Yes, life dawned, and it is as eye-witnesses that we give you the news of that life, that eternal life which ever abode with the Father, and has dawned now on us," but let us not dare to narrow our share in that life down to a "purely spiritual" conception. God is spirit from eternity, but He was made flesh in time, and within the tiny compass of an infant's body the re-creation of the world begins. Never again can spirit disdain matter, for from this night on matter is not only holy but the cause of sanctification for spirit. Matter has been debased by mind, and lent itself to aiding and abetting the spiritual monstrosity of sin, but now spirits must humbly ask for healing through body, and by means of material things. Water, and bread, and wine from the New King's table, are become the signs of redemption, the way to life with God.

That's what we all want for Christmas—real lust for real life, charity that is in the bones and blood of us, not just an icing poured over a rather doughy cake. And that is what we get, if we come humbly to the place where God distributes all good through the small warm body of a living child.

JEAN-JOSEPH SURIN

By

MICHEL DE CERTEAU

JEAN-JOSEPH SURIN was born at Bordeaux in 1600. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1616 and at the end of his period of training, he came under the influence of Père Lallemant, whose teaching he treasured. His health was poor. He was first sent to Marennes in the district of Saintonge, then in 1634 to Loudun as exorcist. Here in an atmosphere of nervous excitability he became so worn out by excessive strain that he contracted a mental illness which he attributed to the devil. This obsession with the devil and despondency lasted for nearly twenty years. When at last he was freed from this trial, which had already been marked by extraordinary graces, he began writing the works which made him one of the foremost French spiritual writers.

Surin's output was considerable, but for the most part still needs careful editing.¹ An incisive lucidity marks all his writings. It is not strictly speaking an insight of a psychological order, nor the fruit of a profound scholarship, but is essentially an understanding that comes of experience, an unerring recognition of what is true and what is false. The accuracy of Surin's diagnosis is accompanied by a clear, absolute and passionate choice of God, which enables him, in all the circumstances of daily life, to distinguish between the helps and hindrances to love, and to unravel what is from God and what is not. Heart and head are inspired by the same singleness of purpose. Surin's thought flashes and cuts like a diamond. His love is violent: that is the soul of his clarity.

Surin built no theological system, and he did not attempt any abstract description of interior states of soul. He kept to the realm

¹ Apart from the first two volumes of his *Lettres* (ed. 1926 and 1928) the *Fondements* (ed. 1930), the *Questions sur l'Amour* (ed. 1930) and the *Poésies* (ed. 1957) the following works are quoted either from older editions or from manuscript: *Guide Spirituelle*, *La Science Experimentale*, *Le Triomphe de l'Amour*, *Les Dialogues*, *Le Catéchisme Spirituel*, and the remaining letters.

of facts, and in this way tried to present an experimental science of the spiritual life. His aim was to trace its logical structure in the successive phenomena which the soul experiences and which mark the development of a human life created by God. For the mystery of the human personality is also the mystery of divine action. The problem of man is therefore placed in the context of man's own life, itself an infinite gift and source of a true love. This teaching is not peculiar to Surin, but he adopted it with a special emphasis, expressed it in illuminating language, and above all lived it with an exceptional intensity. Here was a soul who had visited the frontiers of human experience, and had experienced the depths of madness and despair and the inaccessible heights which are known to us only through the accounts written by mystics. He was an eye-witness from unexplored regions, where few have ventured, an explorer into the abyss both of his own nothingness and the divine indwelling. His extraordinary experience gave clarity to a truth that is a commonplace of the Christian life; and he saw it with an intensity that can hardly be imagined by those whose experience is ordinary. He had run the risk of utter failure and had known the extreme of ecstasy and despair; now he perceived in all its purity the internal dialectic of the soul's meeting with God. There can be no doubt that this is the ultimate reason for the clarity we find in Surin. His message deals with the absolute, and he knows what he is talking about. But before sketching his doctrine, it will be as well, perhaps, to recall his life.

In 1656 Père Surin occupied a room in the infirmary in an out-of-the-way corner of the thriving Jesuit College at Bordeaux. His colleagues were esteemed and were responsible for the education of the most brilliant and well-to-do pupils of the town. Surin was confined to the house by the mental sickness which had crippled him for nearly twenty years. On the evening of 9 June, as he was standing beside his bed, he was (so he tells us) again seized by the thought that haunted him, "Tu es damné."

This thought began to cause me great distress, and I felt a strong stirring of the heart which made me resigned to this state, if it should be the will of God. I uttered these words, I desire it, if God desires it, and I buried my face in the bedclothes to mark my total submission to the divine will.

Though without hope he did not renounce his love. He wished

at least to acquiesce in the Almighty's inscrutable design, but his practice of abandonment united him to the God he thought he had lost. In his own words, "From then on I seemed to feel within me a second wave which submerged and engulfed me and brought peace to my soul."¹

This episode marked the beginning of his cure. His behaviour is typical of the man. He was divided between the obsession haunting his mind, and the deeper spiritual movement which comes from the heart. In him, the "Thou" and the "I" confront each other. Although the prospect of damnation is presented as certain ("Thou art damned"), yet the voice condemning him is not his own, ("Thou"). When he reflects on damnation, the idea becomes a mere hypothesis (If God desires it)—the limiting case of a love which knows no limits. Such a dichotomy is a sign of sickness, but even in his sickness a deeper self comes to the surface ("I desire it"). Surin no longer tries to carry absurdity to the lengths of committing suicide. He faces up to the psychological fact of his misfortune and accepts it. This acceptance is not something purely passive, it is an offering of self and stems from something more radical than despair. His indomitable desire to remain united to God, whatever the cost, gives the lie to the apparent acceptance of his loss. It transforms the whole psychological situation and reduces what seemed a fixed decree to the status of hypothesis. The soul is open to the mystical "flood"; the divine presence within him takes possession of a soul that is thus intent on appointing no limits to the gift of himself. From now on the powerful wave welling up from the depths of the Godhead will gradually wear away the superficial split in his personality which is the outward sign of his madness.

This crisis marked the turning point in the malady whose origins Surin had analysed with great clarity and which he regarded as diabolic possession. He wrote in 1635:

It is as though I had two souls, one of which is evicted from my body and deprived of the use of its organs, and which stands on one side to watch an intruder at work. I am conscious of being damned, and dread it. I feel myself pierced with shafts of despair in an alien soul which seems to be mine, while my other soul is full of confidence, mocking the feelings of dread, and perfectly free to reprove their author.²

¹ *Lettres* II, 66-7. ² *Lettres* I, 127.

It is probably correct to diagnose this as a case of psychosis: dispossession of self, morbid hypersexuality, obsession, and hallucinations akin to persecution mania. But it is impossible to doubt that for nearly twenty years Surin suffered from a dual personality. Whatever the precise nature of his malady, and the circumstances attending his cure, it is certain that extraordinary graces and a great holiness of life existed along with his morbid condition. Surin's sincerity when he describes the graces he has received, cannot be called in question. The precise account he gives of them, as well as his behaviour as a religious, his apostolic charity and his spiritual teaching, put their authenticity beyond doubt.

After this long period of trial he felt the need to give expression to the truth he had experienced. His was not the desire to reach a wide public, for he did not foresee that his work might one day be published. But he felt an urge to describe a truth which had rescued him from his obsessions and opened his soul to the action of God's infinite presence. At first he was incapable of writing himself, so he dictated the first books of his *Spiritual Catechism* ("Like a trumpet" was his own phrase, and it was surely a hymn of victory). This was not a personal memoir but an enunciation of the Truth and the Way that leads to it. He adopted the dialogue form spontaneously, both because every catechism makes use of question and answer, and because this method served to prolong his interior experiences. The answers were also a witness to the victory which God had won over his anxiety of soul.

The blessings he had received were to benefit many others. In telling of the ways in which divine love works he had already helped to make these ways better known, for his books were soon widely circulated. Surin, an apostle by vocation and by temperament, was eager to set others on fire with his own zeal. He wanted to set all Christians on the path along which he had been led and enlist them all in the same crusade. From the first moment he was able to leave his house, until his death in 1665, this indomitable little man limped his way along the roads of France to preach in convents and country villages the theme of love.

No one consecrates himself to God without making a complete

break with his past. "Every good *habit* calls at first for violence."¹ It is this "foundation of the spiritual life," which Père Lallemant calls "second conversion" and Surin "the first step." It consists of a *determined resolve* to refuse God nothing, to do *everything* in one's power to meet all His wishes. However good a man may be, anything he does before taking this resolve is strictly speaking outside the scope of the spiritual life.² There is no spiritual life, no life that is to say, animated by love and holiness, without a "leap"³ marking the transition from the relative to the absolute. Where it is a case of all or nothing, the beginning must be of the same nature as the end proposed—namely, universal and absolute. A man must fix no limits to God's claims if he is to correspond to His limitless essence.

Here a parallel may be drawn with philosophy. For Descartes, the *point de départ* is universal doubt; for Hegel the resolve to throw oneself headlong into philosophy. In the same way the soul can set out on the search for God only in a spirit of complete submission. He must place himself and his whole life entirely at God's disposal. The absolute character of the undertaking calls for a correspondingly absolute disposability on the part of the subject. Surin never tires of harping on this point; "I have but one theme-song—empty the heart of everything."⁴ "God does not want half-hearted determination. He wants whole-heartedness with no back-sliding."⁵ "Some things have got to be done at one stroke. It is no use deliberating and putting them off; if you start making conditions and compromises, you achieve nothing."⁶ Sticking to the maxims I mentioned—complete self-renunciation—is a case in point."⁷ Surin is well aware that any reservation, however slight, on a question of principle does more than set a limit to one's abandonment to God; it completely alters one's whole spiritual attitude. "To win everything you must lose everything: to keep back even a *little* is enough to miss the *whole* prize."⁸ The Christian who is ready to do everything, but with certain reservations, is not really ready to do everything. He is a complete non-starter. "Throw aside this

¹ *Dialogues* 1, 15.

² *Fondements* 5, 11. (The italics throughout are mine).

³ *Questions* 1, 2.

⁴ *Letter*, late 1660 to Madame du Houx.

⁵ *Letter* to Madame de la Chèze.

⁶ Surin goes on to add: "People who make compromises only want to do things by half."

⁷ *Letter* to Anne Buignon, 1 July 1660.

⁸ *Lettres* 1, 264.

half-service then, since the law demands everything. In other words, the perfection of the law demands that God should be *everything* to man, that Christ should be *everything* to the Christian.¹ The absolute character of this resolve shows itself in its immediacy. When once the soul has recognised God for what He is, no room is left for the many-sided claims of existence in time. Only a total and immediate renunciation can correspond to God's eternal omnipotence. Not that the self-renunciation is immediately effective, but the initial offer must be. "I mean that the desire must be formed all at once, though the carrying out of the desire is gradual."²

If this desire is lacking, spiritual writings are useless. For their whole purpose is to throw light on the stages of a spiritual progress that only begins with this firm resolution. Hence Surin frequently declares that he will keep in written touch only with those souls that are resolute. If they have taken the resolution he will spare no pains to help them; if not, his words go for nothing. It is unfortunately just this quality of decision which is so often lacking in souls who propose to give themselves to God, and who have not in fact weighed the seriousness of the choice they have made. "Most men are 'hesitating' and lack the firm resolve to do good. The enterprise calls for all man's energies, and they set to work with feeble hearts . . . Truly their salvation is in jeopardy. For when there is such a mixture of evil and good in their lives, when their allegiance is so divided, can one say that they have chosen God for their master?"³ As a result they are incapable, not indeed of doing what is right, but of receiving all that God has in store for them and of fulfilling all that He wishes to achieve in and through them. Hence the vehemence with which Surin seeks for whole-heartedness, a vehemence which leads to his uncompromising attitude and tears off the mask from any "pusillanimity."⁴

Surin will never consent to "leave the field of battle."⁵ Nor does he minimise the dangers of the rules of this "war." "The time is short, the task is great . . . You have only to give yourself to the love of Jesus Christ. Take this step with determination, make a generous effort, set your heart free, free from all attachment."⁶

¹ Letter to Anne Buignon, 1 July 1660.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Dialogues* I, 11.

⁴ *Lettres* I, 137.

⁵ *Lettres* I, 170.

⁶ *Lettres* I, 209.

It is a "hot-war" with many "knocks."¹ Surin is full of military metaphors—the need of courage in fighting the enemy, references to castles, victory, crusades. Death is a very real risk, for the scale of this war is measured by God's grandeur, and that says everything.

Give yourself to Him and to His rule in your heart. Surrender all your rights . . . allow Him to strip you of everything . . . to separate you from everything . . . to tear you apart from yourself. His task is to destroy, to ravage, to strip and then to refashion, restore and replace. He is wonderfully terrible and wonderfully gentle. The more terrible He is the more desirable and attractive will He be. In the way He works, He is like a king at the head of His army, before whom everything must give way, yet His sweetness is so winning that it melts all hearts. He only desires subjects in order to share His kingdom with them. If He dares everything, it is to communicate Himself without limit. When He separates, His purpose is to unite to Himself those He has separated from the rest of the world. He asks everything and gives everything. Nothing can satisfy Him, and yet He is content with but a little, for He stands in need of nothing.²

"Hardiness" is the first requirement.³ Then follow nakedness of heart and liberty of soul. After a soul has taken the first step, he must stand fast by the decision he has made. That decision may still stand with a great deal of hidden *amour-propre*. But from now on the man whose mind is made up hungers after lucidity. He wants to carve a way through the mixed motives which are found in all actions. Because he aims at truth, he recognises "the mixture of spirits within himself."⁴ "The devil always mingles his own activity with that of God."⁵ This is the period of discernment. It is at this stage that Surin places all his knowledge of spiritual things at the disposal of his readers and of souls under his direction. He helps them to unravel the secret contradictions in their deepest desire, to "unmask"⁶ all their pretexts, and "oust the involuntary reluctance that disguises itself under high-flown sentiments."⁷

For a man truly to give up self-satisfaction, he must prefer God in everything. This is certainly the best way of showing his love. Everything must "tend towards God."⁸ Hence it is the

¹ *Lettres* 1, 132.

² *Questions* 1, 7.

³ *Lettres* 1, 201.

⁴ *Lettres* 2, 127.

⁵ *Lettres* 2, 120.

⁶ *Lettres* 1, 190.

⁷ *Lettres* 1, 191.

⁸ *Questions* 1, 3.

intention rather than the nature of the action which Surin keeps constantly in view. After all is he not dealing with resolute souls; these do not have to be reminded of what the law forbids. But Surin also knows that selfish motives can inspire even the best of actions; while every action not in itself evil can be performed for love. From such a point of view spiritual formation becomes essentially a purification of motives.

"Which way does the heart tend?"¹ is now the fundamental question, and its purpose is not to bring the soul, now in ecstasy before the object of its love, down to earth again; it is rather to confront the object of desire with the ultimate goal of all desire, and so to bring about an interior *dépassement*. This is the road that leads gradually into the "realm of pure love."² Activity is now defined by its "purity," which consists in a rightly-directed love, an abandonment of self, and a desire to please God and share in His interests. It is characterised in "doing everything purely for God."³ More explicitly, the motive of "God" is so pure that the soul is at pains to act solely because "His glory is at stake."⁴

The true scope of this doctrine comes out in its paradoxical nature. "I count all things as dung that I may gain Christ;" and yet this unique love does not exclude love for mankind. "We must so regulate our conduct towards our neighbour that we are ready to die for him and at the same time be prepared to look on him as our enemy."⁵ Our neighbour is worth the sacrifice of life in so far as he is the object of divine love in which the Christian shares. He is our enemy to the extent that any attachment to him leads us away from our true destiny, namely, the Godhead who unites all men in Himself. Love of God and love of our neighbour do not conflict. The one embraces the other. The first is universal, the second particular. Divine love is the foundation of human love, which can have no other foundation. This intermingling of human and divine is the essence of the Gospel message.

However, it is possible for an opposition to exist at the level of a man's motives. God's primacy will then call for a painful separation from creatures. Contradiction besets the soul whose love is divided between two objectives and is unable to recognise their fundamental unity. For this reason unity features prominently in any pedagogy of the spiritual conscience, while it plays a very

¹ Questions 1, 7. ² Questions 2, 2. ³ Questions 1, 5. ⁴ Ibid. ⁵ Lettres 1, 19.

minor role in the theology of love. Surin's whole aim is to eradicate this division from the soul, until it is able to concentrate entirely on God and seize upon all love in Him.

"Love is a powerful stream from God."¹ In man "purity" is the result of a union effected within a love that streams from God. In other words, it is an exact balance between the particular and the universal, the finite and the infinite. And so, after the necessary separation, Surin is all in favour of the soul abandoning itself to God's hands and practising the presence of God rather than making a frontal attack against particular attachments. Since everything that takes place ultimately manifests the will of God, nothing is fundamentally indifferent to a love that seeks Him alone. The important thing is not to leave everything, but to find God.

The same holds for the gifts which come to a faithful soul through its love of God. Is this love disinterested? If it is, should it go to the lengths of renouncing all reward and even the prospect of salvation? This question was to become one of the key problems of Quietism, and Surin dealt with it firmly. On the one hand, there are the favours which God showers on those who love Him: He is infinite fullness and plenty, and opens the "treasure-house of spiritual richness"² to those who are His own.

"Whatever you give up will soon be yours a hundred times over."³ The benefits which Surin promises those who pray and seek for God are joy and happiness. "Blessed are they . . .," this is the burden of his song. On the other hand, these favours depend on a single condition—the soul must love God for Himself. As soon as the soul in its love of God looks for anything beyond God, it can no longer claim to love Him above all else. It makes no difference if the desired gifts are those normally conferred on the faithful. There is of course no blame attached to hoping for these events, but it is an imperfection, a misunderstanding of the soul's true goal. "So, when the soul has reached the stage of looking only to God"—reached, that is, to pure love—"God fills her with His fullness, and the soul cries out 'My God and my all.' " This is true happiness. "But if the soul fixes her heart, however slightly, on any creature apart from God," by showing attachment to gifts which are not referred back to God—"then it cannot utter this cry quite sincerely."⁴

¹ Questions 1, 1. ² Questions 3, 1. ³ Questions 3, 2. ⁴ Questions 1, 5.

Pure love leads to a "dilation of soul," to a detachment from one's own interests, together with an interior expansion of the soul in God. To recognise the particular as a manifestation of the universal is not to deny existence to the particular, it is rather a refusal to look upon the particular as being everything, and is a corresponding acceptance of God through whatever particular medium He chooses to reveal Himself. Pure love is so true to this way of looking at things that it gives them all their true meaning; it never loses itself away from God. "God is enough for you. Be poor, and do not waste your time looking to see if all is going well."¹ To embroil oneself in petty considerations² is further self-love, and there is nothing worse than a heart whose horizon is bounded by trifles.³ Nothing is to be gained by getting angry with oneself and concentrating on personal worries and interests; this only diverts from God the attention which He really deserves. It is His business to cure and to compensate; we have His word for it. "Be patient then and carry the cross of your natural impurity"⁴ and you will be free to give all your attention to God. Purity of heart means just this. "Keep yourself free," Surin repeats again and again, "in order to love and fear God Himself. You will find all in Him who is all."

Sometimes when good and pure souls have had a long apprenticeship in love, and have made frequent efforts to find Our Lord in all things, He will actually let them feel His presence and the workings of His grace within them. This feeling is so strong that we can call it the testimony of the Holy Spirit, who assures them that theirs is the good fortune to be numbered among the children of God. This recalls the saying of St. John in his epistle "He who believes in the Son of God has the testimony of God in himself."⁵

The interior presence of the Holy Spirit is the source of all spiritual life. It reveals itself gradually to those who lose themselves in order to lay themselves open to the activity of divine life, and is manifest in that cry which takes possession of our whole being, "Abba, Father." "With this testimony we are certain, in the darkness of faith here below, that our soul belongs to God and resides in God."⁶ It is not that this conviction claims to anticipate the end of our existence in time nor God's definitive

¹ *Lettres* I, 202.² *Ibid.*³ *Dialogues* I, II, 3.⁴ *Lettres* I, 204.⁵ *Questions* I, 2.⁶ *Questions* I, 2.

judgment. It is rather a deepening faith that experiences mutual love in a spirit of filial piety.

The final degree of this "continual and vital communication between God and the Soul"¹ becomes substantial in the mystical alliance of the Eucharist, the *Mysterium fidei*.² But even in its higher levels this is not so much a direct experience of God as the rapturous awareness of His approach. It is a "divine experience," but not an experience of God. "The divine touch spoken of by the mystics is a supernatural *notion* through which the soul grasps what God is like, not as a result of seeing, but of touching Him." More precisely, "as a result of this divine experience, which is the chief fruit of purity, the soul receives an impression of God and also of the gifts of this purity to which He has raised it."³ The soul is drawn powerfully towards God, altogether captivated by the feeling of His infinite and overflowing presence. The "divine purity" which defines this outburst of love is the inexpressible echo of the divine visitation. "I should not have desired Thee, hadst Thou not first found me." These words, in a context of immediate awareness, sum up the soul's experience which is founded on the Incarnation of the Word and the descent of the Holy Spirit; in short, on the approach of God.

Mystical theology for Surin consists in this experimental knowledge of God. It is a tasting and perception of His "interior presence" awakened by His conversing with the soul. Surin often refers to it as a "universal and confused notion." By "notion" he means not a communion with the act of God, for this would involve complete identification with God Himself, but a welling-up of the spirit after it is brought face to face with Him. A completely novel experience, it is human in character, yet is connected with the engulfing presence of God.

A reference at this point to Origen's "Image" or to the "Eternal Idea" of St. Augustine may help to explain Surin's "notion." It is a source of knowledge rather than its object. It represents a movement towards a goal rather than its attainment; it is not a particular idea, because this awareness of "divinisation" is the very "form" of the experience. Hence its claim to be "universal." "It is like a jet directed from the heart of God on to the tiny heart of man and completely engulfing it"⁴—a "confused" notion

¹ Questions 3, 7. ² Questions 3, 8. ³ Questions 3, 6. ⁴ Questions 3, 10.

precisely in that it has no definite content, but is the basic principle of all religious knowledge. At the same time it is also a "clear" notion to the extent that it is the original datum of every religious intuition. One can regard it as the Idea of Infinity seized in the very movement that leads to God.

Surin also speaks of it as an immediate perception of the *coincidentia oppositorum* in God—for instance His Power and His Meekness. "When these two qualities come together in a point, they form a lightning flash that fills the soul with brightness."¹ But the clash of two ideas will not produce such a flash. It is the obscure yet somehow dazzling perception by the creature of its relation to God, or, to be more exact, of that relation between God and himself which shines through the spiritual condition of mankind. It is the "disproportion between the soul's lowly being and the divine Being of God, pursuing and consuming it with majesty and love."² This ontological experience recognises God through man's worth in God and for what God can make of him. The existential experience of this relation to God coincides with knowledge of God. Alongside the divine Being the mystic is a being faced with death (*être-pour-la-mort*), yet a being who is loved. At the level of existence he acquires an immediate and in some sort *a priori* knowledge of this "harmony of extremes."³ God's majesty and mercy; in a word, His infinity. From now on this "universal and confused notion" will set a permanent seal on the life of the mystic. It is the interior form, the fundamental category of that life.

Surin's own philosophical formation and the general state of scholasticism in his day explain the vigour with which he defended this essential and immediate knowledge against the attacks of those he depreciatingly calls "the philosophers."⁴ With a violent shading off at times into indignation and irony he assails those closed minds who admit as true knowledge only that which proceeds from distinct ideas and from successive conclusions. To their syllogisms and ideas of "understanding" (*entendement*) he opposes his interior awareness and the notions of the "intellect" (*l'intelligence*). This opposition is not merely the characteristic of Surin's whole conception of religious knowledge. It must also be attributed to the type of philosophy he had studied. For the

¹ *Ibid.*

² *Questions* 3, 10.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ This is the main theme of the *Guide Spirituelle*.

opponents of mysticism, like the Carmelite Chéron, wanted to retain from their master St. Thomas only his theory of abstract ideas derived from sensation. They neglected certain key passages in the *De Veritate* which deal with interior illumination and the treatment Thomas gives of the gift of Wisdom and of the Beatitudes. It seems that Surin never read the works of any theologian who understood the nature of the problem with which he was dealing. These shortcomings in his theological background show themselves in the over-psychological character of his analyses. But this does not prove that his critics were right. He was up against "doctors who can believe something only if it has first been through the mill of their syllogisms,"¹ who could see in mystics only incoherent praters, writers of nonsense fit merely for ignorant women, devotees of enthusiasm and melancholy whom a good bowl of porridge would soon cure of their hallucinations. Looking back on this one-sided dialogue, one is left wondering, a little wistfully, what would have been the outcome of a meeting between Surin and Malebranche.

It is obvious that the problems raised by the corpus of Surin's writings cannot be settled within the limits of an article. One thing is clear. Surin's work must not be judged in terms of its author's mental illness. To suspect a man's writings *a priori* because he was unwell mentally would be both unjust and mistaken. For one thing, Surin had recovered by the time he wrote the greater number of his books. Also, in spite of his illness, he received an abundance of the highest graces, while in passing judgment on his own condition he always remained perfectly lucid. Finally, his work forms an objective whole whose truth must be considered on its own merits. Only when this has been done does it become possible to assess the consequences of the writer's misfortune. A number of clues to the nature and history of Surin's case are to be found in his writings. But the writings themselves, which were examined minutely before publication, do not appear to be tainted with any doctrinal deviation.²

The trenchant character of his teaching is the aspect which

¹ Questions 3, 6.

² The Italian translation of the *Catéchisme Spirituelle* was later in 1687 put on the Index because of the use made of it by the Quietists of Naples.

seems most to recall his illness. At first sight he appears to leave out of all account the slow passage of time. "I find that God places the soul outside the bonds of time."¹ Although this expression is used in an offhand manner in one of his letters, it seems to bring out a leading idea of Surin's. We have seen how the "first step" must be instantaneous; the heart must remain fixed in a purity which is the mysterious forerunner of future happiness. The "universal and confused notion" is the perception of a union with God which remains the unique foundation for all spiritual life. Throughout his writing the absolute is regarded as outside time. But this is surely always the case when questions are raised about being. For Surin, whose mystical passion inevitably reminds one of Pascal's metaphysical passion, the temptation was to confound the perception with the nature of the absolute. But as his destiny unfolds itself, he was led to embrace anew the common "order" which God had made his own. The logic of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the glowing content of his "mystical theology," recalled him to the "simplicity of the common way"² in which the highest coincides with the lowest. As a country missionary, who fostered devotions which we would think childish, he came to insist more and more on the state of faith which "does away with the impress of anything that could be called extraordinary, to lodge us in the common usages and run of life."³

In all this he was impelled by the depth of his mystical experience. His humility is part of the mystery surging over him. "Although these waters roar mightily when one is in them, they flow for all that in secret channels."⁴ Thus it is that the interior mystery re-enacts to the full the mystery of God. The voice of the mystic enters into the silence of the Presence which is beyond reach, yet granted to all.

¹ *Lettres* 2, 197. ² Letter 11 April 1662. ³ *Ibid.* ⁴ Letter 7 May 1662.

MORALS AND PSYCHOLOGY¹

By

JOHN MARSHALL

I HAVE CHOSEN the subject of imputability and responsibility because, in my view, this is the most pressing problem facing those whose work must involve consideration of the accountability of men for their actions. It is just over thirty years since the great moral theologian Vermeersch wrote that, "the grave and thorny problem . . . of subjective imputability"² is the challenge of our age, and the statement is as true to-day. It may seem bold for a layman to venture into this field, but the need to-day is for more secular students of and contributions to this subject. Moreover, a more responsible outlook on the part of the layman is very much in keeping with the modern view of the lay apostolate in the Church. The day when a doctor could say, with an apparently clear conscience, that he was concerned only with the medical aspects of a case, and that morals were a matter for the priest, is happily fast disappearing. This is not to deny that the teaching authority of the Church rests with the successors of St. Peter and the apostles, namely the Pope and Bishops of the Catholic Church. But it is to deny that modern ethical problems can be adequately met by a system by which the secular aspects of a problem are dealt with by one expert and the sacred by another, the person with the problem being buffeted between the two like a boat adrift on a stormy sea.

One of the greatest difficulties in this field has been lack of precision in the use of words, or even worse, the use of the same word in different senses by opposing disciplines. The use of the word freedom is an example of this as we shall see later. Moreover, it is not only unclarity in the use of words, but also the emotional overtones attached to them that matters.

¹ The Leycester King Memorial Lecture 1960.

² Vermeersch, *Soixante ans de theologie morale* (1929), 56, 880.

It is a fundamental Catholic teaching that man is possessed of free-will. By this we mean that at the time of a decision a man is able to make, or not to make, that decision. It is not of necessity that he makes the decision; it is not of necessity that he does not make the decision; he is able to do either; in fact he chooses one course and rejects the other. But it is not part of the doctrine of free-will that all the acts of man are subject to his free choice. Man is composed of matter, hence is subject to the laws of physics and chemistry; this matter is integrated into a biological organism, hence he is subject to the laws of biology; this biological organism is extremely developed, hence man behaves in conformity with the laws of that branch of biology we designate as psychology. Nor is non-voluntary activity confined to simple or unusual actions. Slips of the tongue, of which Freud made so much, are an example of a human action which is non-voluntary. The production of evidence that such slips are not of choice, but are manifestations of activity in the unconscious, in no way affects our view of free-will, for it has never been suggested that free-will was concerned. Theologians have distinguished these two types of acts as *actus humanus*, where the action is the result of a deliberate choice of the will, and *actus hominis* where, though a human being is acting, it is not as a result of the exercise of his will.

Having made this distinction between these two kinds of human acts, we must not commit the modern error of the specialist, by thinking that man usually acts with either one or the other type of act. In practice most acts are a compound of both types, the voluntary utilising the involuntary to attain its end, or the involuntary provoking in its train a voluntary action. Thus the attraction of a man towards a woman may be primarily involuntary, but whether this initial biological reaction produces any results depends upon the intervention of the voluntary. It would be as foolish to suggest that sexual attraction only arises as an act of the will, as it would be to suggest that it is quite outside human control. The two aspects of human actions, the voluntary and the involuntary are interwoven in this very common human situation.

It is therefore in the realm of the *actus humanus*, or fully human act, that free-will is exercised. But, contrary to what is commonly alleged, the doctrine of free-will does not propose that the will

is entirely free from influence, even in those acts of man that are fully human. The will is subjected to many influences including that of non-voluntary acts. There are forces within ourselves, and in our environment, which hamper and oppose the exercise of our will, making choice more difficult. But in the final analysis in normal people the will is able to accept, or reject, a course of action. In the words of Pius XII the fact that "energies may exercise pressure on an activity does not necessarily signify that they compel it."¹ They may influence the ease with which a choice is made and a decision reached, but they do not make the decision one of necessity.

The word freedom is therefore used with two different meanings. In Catholic doctrine freedom of the will does not mean a will that is free from all influence. It does mean that when all influence has been brought to bear, including that of grace, the will is still able to accept or reject a course of action. The ease with which it does this affects the degree of responsibility of the man for his action, hence the amount of praise or blame he will thereby acquire.² In much psychological usage, on the other hand, freedom of the will means a will entirely free from influence. Because the will is patently not free from influence, this usage would deny freedom of the will, but what they deny is not the freedom of the will of Catholic doctrine. Hence confusion in the meaning of words adds to the difficulties of an already difficult subject.

We must now turn our attention to the views of those who deny that man is free to choose or reject a particular course of action in the field of his truly human acts. This is no new problem in the history of mankind. The heresy of predestination was a denial of free-will; but this was argued on theological grounds. The significance of the Freudian psychoanalytical theory was that, for the first time, science was alleged to have produced evidence denying free-will. Space forbids me to enlarge at length upon psychoanalytical theory; in any case, it is probably well known. Essentially Freud's concept of the unconscious was of an area of human activity of which the person himself was unaware. Within this area were to be found primitive drives or urges concerned with activities which Freud subsumed under the term sexual. In addition conflicts in the field of awareness,

¹ A.A.S. (1953), 45, 279.

² Cf. Canon 2199.

which the person had difficulty in resolving, could be repressed, that is, driven from awareness into the unconscious. This repression of a conflict did not thereby abolish it, for it continued in the unconscious and occasionally would erupt into awareness in a disguised form such as dreams, slips of the tongue and in the symptoms of neurotic illness. Moreover, it could influence conscious human actions without the subject being aware. The person may have thought he was acting in a certain manner for reasons of which he was aware, but in reality he was acting thus because of the influence of unconscious factors upon him.

The essential discrepancy between psychoanalytical theory and the doctrine of free-will is that the former asserts that man is so influenced by the forces in his unconscious as to be completely determined in his human acts. His subjective experience of free choice is an illusion, for all the while he is being directed by forces of which he is unaware. It follows from this that though a man's acts may be imputed to him, he is not responsible for them as truly voluntary acts. Punishment and reward, whether bestowed by human agency or divine have therefore no meaning, except in so far as they provide another influence determining the conduct of man.

It is no part of my task to make an assessment of the validity of psychoanalytical theory, but certain points are worth making in relation to our primary subject. First, Freudian theories were initially built upon the observations made during analysis of people who were ill, and then transposed to normal subjects. Pathology may be a guide to physiology, but not invariably. Secondly, though subsequently many people who were not ill underwent analysis as part of their preparation and training for work as psychoanalysts, they cannot be considered to be the type of representative sample of the population which is required by experimental design in modern psychology. They are by their nature a self-selected group, hence to extrapolate conclusions from them to the population as a whole is unjustified. Thirdly, the significance attributed to the phenomena unearthed by psychoanalytical methods depends entirely upon subjective interpretation by the analyst. In the words of Freud himself, "These facts, it is true, do not make clear what has actually been forgotten, but they give the individual such clear abundant signs, that from them, and with the help of certain additions and

interpretations, the doctor can conjecture or reconstruct what has been forgotten."¹ This is a point too often forgotten, the subjective interpretations of the analyst being put forward as facts. Fourthly, the therapeutic results achieved by psychoanalysis, which might provide supportive evidence for the validity of its hypotheses have never been scientifically assessed. One of the most important recent advances in medical science has been the development of careful techniques for the design, execution and statistical analysis of therapeutic trials. It has been realised that anecdotal evidence, or even an apparently strong body of evidence based on case-histories has little scientific value in the assessment of the effects of treatment upon conditions which are highly variable in their mode of presentation, their symptomatology, their evolution and their natural cure rate. This is not to say that psychoanalysis may not be of value; it is simply to state that its therapeutic value has not been proven. Fifthly, even were it shown that psychoanalysis is of therapeutic value, it does not follow that its theoretical foundation is thereby established. There may be many other ways in which the social situation provided by psychoanalytical treatment may influence a person other than those proposed by psychoanalytical theory. It seems important therefore to bear these facts in mind when considering the problem of determinism, for we are not opposing theological teaching by scientific facts, but by hypotheses which remain unproven.

There are two further points which are worth mentioning. The first is the tendency to quote as evidence in favour of determinism the influence of the unconscious upon acts which are not truly human acts in the sense we have defined. The slips of the tongue already mentioned are an example of this. They certainly can arise as a result of influences of which we may be unaware, but they are not human acts in the true sense. Their manner of occurrence indicates clearly that they are not subject to free-choice.

The second point is that instances of unconscious influence are quoted, which are manifestly not unconscious. The paranoid man who murders his wife because of a delusion of her infidelity, is not acting under the influence of an unconscious motive. He is very much aware of why he acts thus. His reasons may not be

¹ Quoted from *Psychoanalysis and Personality* by Nuttin (1954), p. 11. (Sheed and Ward, London).

valid, but they are not unconscious. Likewise, there are many influences under which men act, and of which they are more or less aware, but which they attempt to minimise, or rationalise. Thus a man may think he is helping a woman out of charity, but all the while it is because he finds her attractive and were she a man he would not have the same desire to help. However, he dismisses such thoughts, and convinces himself that his motives are unadulterated and of the highest. It would be wrong to say he is influenced by his unconscious. He is in fact painfully conscious of his less worthy motives.

Against this background we may now consider some factors which seem to me to be of current importance in assessing the responsibility of individuals for their acts. Theologians have always recognised that ignorance, fear, passion and violence may interfere with the freedom of a human act. Most commonly the examples quoted in theological writings are of simple ignorance that a thing is wrong, as when a person's culture has taught him that a plurality of wives is the normal state; or of sudden and severe accesses of fear or passion, arising in a person whose usual behaviour appears to be unimpeded by such forces. Such examples create the impression that interference with the freedom of will is unusual; the exception rather than the rule.

There is another influence upon current thinking about the problem of responsibility. Man's faculties are often conceived as operating in isolation one from another. Thus the emotions are deemed to have no direct effect upon the will. The traditional view is that the intellect presents information to the will, upon which the latter acts. Emotion may cloud the intellect so that the information presented to the will is not a true representation of reality, but it does not affect the will directly. This insulation of the will endows it with an ethereal quality, as though it were disembodied, and capable of acting other than through, and in response to, the activity of the body. It takes no account for example of the fact that physical debility may so impoverish the person, that the will becomes incapable of effective action despite a clear vision of what should be done.

Accompanying this habit of isolating the will, there is a further tendency to particulate man's nature into many compartments; will, intellect, memory, understanding, emotions and so on. Some of these compartments are again subdivided, as in the case of the

emotions into concupiscible and irascible emotions, and these again are further subdivided into a variety of single emotions, as though they were entities, rather than different manifestations of the one man acting. The impression created by this manner of writing is that man is a compound of many individual forces acting largely independently one of another. Nor is it solely a matter of difficulty in verbal presentation, for the particulation of man, represents a concept of his nature and mode of acting. Thus the will is conceived as acting serenely in isolation until suddenly it is deviated from its course by an impulse such as anger.

This view of man seems to me to have been an important factor in our present failure to grapple successfully with the problem of the freedom of certain acts, and of man's responsibility for them, hence I would like to spend a little time on it, and especially upon the influence of the intellect upon responsibility. Man is nothing if not a unity, an integrated whole. Even though his soul is a substance in its own right, it is recognised by philosophers as an incomplete substance, for without the body it is incapable of many actions. Thus the moment the soul and body are separated, man can sin no more, nor can he merit. It is the integration of soul and body that makes the being, who is capable of truly human acts. The habit of thinking of the body as an unimportant appendage of the soul is bad. The question, "Of which must I take most care, of my body or of my soul?" with its answer, "I must take most care of my soul, etc.," entirely ignores the fact that man will be saved or lost, soul and body for all eternity. Difficult as it is, we must accustom ourselves to think of man, not of his soul or of his body; of man acting, not of his will working in a vacuum.

This integration of man's soul and body in our thinking must extend further to embrace in our conceptual picture all manifestations of man's activities, the will, the intellect, the emotions and so on. We must not think of anger as rendering the will impotent; rather it is the angry man who may be incapable of a free act. We must not consider penance as subduing the body so as to render the will more free; rather it is the mortified man who is least impeded in his human acts. This is not just a semantic device, but it is the expression of a concept which is vital to any real understanding of the difficulties of the individual who needs help with a problem of responsibility.

Viewing the intellect in this light, we see that it does not operate in isolation. The understanding and appraisal of knowledge is always influenced by the emotional state of the individual. The emotional overtones may be intense or slight, but they are always there. Even when the subject matter itself is little evocative of emotion, our interest in, and grasp of, it is influenced by our current emotional state. Depression or anxiety, even when unrelated to the current task, influence our ability to understand and handle the present problem. We recognise this full well when we declare that sex in its human application cannot be satisfactorily taught in schools as though it were algebra, because intellectual appreciation cannot be divorced from emotional reaction. But we do not recognise the same interweaving of the intellectual and emotional activity of man, when we consider the responsibility of a man for his acts. "Did you know it was wrong?" is an inadequate question, when put in isolation, to determine moral responsibility. A man may know a thing is wrong in the sense that he has been so informed by an authority, but he may not *feel* that it is wrong, either at the time of acting or even in some cases more continuously. The act is still of course objectively wrong, for the moral law is objective not subjective, but whether the act is subjectively wrong cannot be decided only by what is in the man's intellect; it must take into account the state of the whole man.

This question of knowing and appreciating the morality of an act is extremely relevant to current situations in which the question of responsibility frequently arises. Cognition or knowing has been divided into two types; conceptual, when a person simply knows or is informed of a matter, and evaluative, when he knows, appreciates, and realises the full significance of all that is involved in that item of knowledge.¹ A person with conceptual knowledge only, may be incapable of a fully human act with regard to this knowledge, because he lacks that essential element of full awareness of his potential responsibility, which is necessary for a human act. This situation arises in the very difficult and problematical field of sexual morality.

Diminution of responsibility is often alleged with regard to sexual acts. Usually it is the overwhelming effect of the sexual

¹ Ford and Kelly, *Contemporary Moral Theology*, Vol. I. (The Mercier Press Ltd., Cork. 1958).

urge that is advanced as the factor which diminishes responsibility, and indeed this emotional factor may play an important part. But in my experience the factor of conceptual versus evaluative knowledge more often requires to be weighed. This may seem at first sight surprising, for who does not know that the misuse of sex is wrong. But more careful thought reveals that the problem is by no means so simple. The majority of people complete their religious education when they leave school at the age of fifteen years. At that time their instruction in the morality of sexual acts has of necessity been limited by their immaturity. Thereafter they are given no systematic instruction. Such enlightenment as they subsequently receive, because it is given by media such as sermons and pastoral letters, must be couched in the most general terms. Intermingled with this instruction is a vast indoctrination in the opposite sense, accomplished by films, books, magazines, newspapers, radio and television, either directly and overtly, or indirectly and subtly. If we objectively appraise these facts, dwell upon them without prejudice, and remind ourselves constantly that we who are judging have often spent years in deep and detailed study of these matters, in contrast to the haphazard enlightenment of those we judge, can we be surprised that many people lack an evaluative knowledge of, for example, the evil of contraception? Is it surprising that their views vary, some thinking that it is the restriction of the size of the family that is the essential evil of contraception; others that it is the use of mechanical and chemical means; others that it is the reason for which it is practised; others that the prohibition against contraception applies only to Catholics; still others that it can only be a question of time before the Church modifies its law in the face of circumstances in the same way that she rescinded the law of Friday abstinence during the war; and yet others that absolution demands only confession without constructive plans for the future?

It is sometimes argued that even though education is defective, there comes a time when a person is informed of the grave nature of these matters, hence from that time a person has "full knowledge." Such a view can only be held by those who have the particulate view of man to which I have referred, by which it is conceived that information presented to a man automatically becomes the evaluative knowledge of that man. Were this so,

many converts to Catholicism would not have endured so great a struggle before receiving the gift of Faith. In matters which touch so deeply and intimately the personal life of an individual, and of the spouse and family, more is required than mere information or a moral ruling to secure for the individual that evaluative knowledge of the nature of his or her acts necessary for full responsibility. A re-education, a change of outlook is required, this process being the conversion of conceptual to evaluative knowledge, a process involving the adjustment of emotional attitudes as well as an operation of the intellect, so that the knowledge no longer belongs only to the intellect, but to the whole man, influencing his entire being and behaviour.

The conversion of conceptual to evaluative knowledge is no longer easily achieved by appeal to authority. When the standard of literacy is low, a declaration from authority is an effective way of providing evaluative knowledge. This is because the illiterate person develops a series of infallible guides such as the priest, the doctor, the school-master and the lawyer, who provide for him information which he is able to accept without question, and integrate into his plan of life as evaluative knowledge. With the increase of literacy, though these guides remain, they no longer have the same prestige and value to the individual. Unhappily this devaluation proceeds more rapidly than does the increasing value of the individual's own education, so that a gap develops. Personal education is not sufficiently advanced to enable a person to acquire conceptual knowledge, and to assimilate it by thought and reasoning so that it becomes evaluative knowledge and influences his behaviour, while at the same time the statements of authorities are no longer readily accepted and integrated into his life. Hence there arise those apparent paradoxes whereby individuals, in apparent good faith, can declare themselves loyal members of the Church, while rejecting one aspect of her moral code. Or they can develop a way of living whereby fundamental evils appear merely as technical breaches of the law. Fr. Bonnar has graphically described this state of mind. He says:

The widespread ignorance of what morality is is well exemplified in the retort of the woman taunted by her enemy as she returned from Church on a Saturday night; "You're taking advantage of me because you know I'm in a state of grace. But wait till Monday!"

In other words, it is not apprehended that the prohibition of an act is anything more than a kind of technical direction.¹

My view, and indeed my thesis, is that the commonest factor influencing responsibility to-day is not the power of overwhelming emotion, but the lack of evaluative knowledge of the true nature of the evils which afflict our society. Education in the field of sexual morality is vague, haphazard and frequently inaccurate. It is usually negative in tone and outlook, conveying nothing of the true nature of sex nor of its appropriate place in the divine plan. It provides only a series of apparently empirical prohibitions, or seemingly reluctant permissions. It creates no sense of sanctity, no feeling of unity with the rest of Christ's teaching. Small wonder in these circumstances that difficulty is encountered in the field of sexual morals, a difficulty which stems not solely from the vehement and demanding nature of this particular biological drive, but from a complete failure to acquire from the outset an integrated evaluative knowledge of its place in God's plan for living.

I have deliberately refrained from discussing the many other factors which may impair responsibility, such as physical and psychological illness, overwhelming emotion, habit, obsessional preoccupation, fear, simple ignorance, violence and impaired awareness. My omission was for two reasons. First, these factors are all listed and discussed in the text-books. Secondly, a recitation of this kind encourages that attitude of mind which mentally ticks off items on a list, conscientiously seeking a sufficient reason for accepting a plea of diminished responsibility, but failing entirely to see the situation as it is for the person with the problem. Many statements have been made that material mortal sin is common in the field of sexual morality, many have been made that material mortal sin is rare. Such statements have little value because, in the first place, they do not have, nor can they have, any valid statistical foundation, and personal impressions are notoriously unreliable in this field. In the second place, the knowledge that material sin is common or rare is of no assistance when dealing with the individual seeking help, for, even if it is common, he may be the rare exception, the more so if he is conscious of a problem; or if it is rare, he may again be the exception.

¹ Bonnar, (1957) *Clergy Review*, 42, 419.

There is no easy, ready-reckoner method of assessing responsibility, whether it be in a court of law, in the consulting-room or in the confessional. It must always, in the last analysis, be a subjective judgment on the part of him who is making the assessment. A more real and understanding assessment will emerge, however, if first we cease to particulate man into a series of separate parts and functions, and think of him and treat him as a whole, all the parts of which are influencing one another all the time; secondly, if we abandon the analytical method of seeking the arbitrary fulfilment of some text-book criterion of diminished responsibility; thirdly, if we appreciate that evaluative knowledge demands emotional acceptance as well as intellectual appreciation, and finally, if we develop that true sympathy, which is essential for the healthy life of the members of one Mystical Body.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES AND OF GOD

A Fifteenth-Century Spiritual Florilegium

By

JAMES WALSH AND ERIC COLLEDGE

IN AUGUST 1955, a pre-Reformation English manuscript in the library of Westminster Cathedral was identified as a Florilegium compiled from the works of the fourteenth-century spiritual writers, Walter Hilton and Julian of Norwich.¹ The manuscript appears to have belonged to the collection which was the nucleus of this library for well over a century, since it carries the bookplate of James Yorke Bramston, Bishop of Usulae, and Vicar Apostolic of the London District from 1827 to 1836.² There is no indication as to its provenance, no title page, and neither Julian nor Hilton is ever named. The Florilegium is of

¹ Cf. *The Westminster Cathedral Chronicle*, October 1955.

² Joseph Gillow, *Biography of English Catholics* (Burns and Oates, London, 1883) Vol. I, pp. 288-9.

modest compass, with no more than a hundred and twelve small folios. It was compiled from commentaries on two Psalms, usually ascribed to Walter Hilton: Psalm 90 *Qui Habitat* (ff. 1-25r). and Psalm 91 *Bonum Est*¹ (ff. 25v-35v); from *The Scale of Perfection*² of the same author (ff. 35v-72r); and from the *Revelations of Divine Love* of Julian of Norwich (ff. 72v-112r).

The manuscript is written by one scribe, in a large, plain, somewhat characterless hand which expert opinion dates as c. A.D. 1500. It could be a little earlier, or several decades later, but greater exactness is not possible. The "editor" (by this term we shall designate the man or woman who first selected these passages for copying) certainly did not write this present manuscript, which contains some mistakes originating in the scribe's unfamiliarity with words which he was copying. He does not seem to have known the verb *arete*, "to impute": on f. 25 he writes *arrectith*, on f. 26^v he gets it right, on f. 27^r he spells it wrong again. On f. 25^r he seems to have invented a new word, *vaynyng*, though it is hard to understand why he should not have recognised "to feign." On f. 27^r he has misunderstood the past participle *wounden* of the strong verb "to wind," where he has substituted *wounded*, giving completely different sense; and on f. 34^v his *thinke* is a failure to recognise *thilke*, "the same." Such mistakes point to an ignorance of words and forms common in the early fifteenth century but perhaps archaic or local by its end; yet the scribe appears also to be mechanically copying what was in front of him, without any responsibility for modernisation. Had the editor not established the text long before this copy was taken, or had the scribe been concerned to bring it up to date, we should not find retained in it terms becoming rare and obscure in the sixteenth century, such as *daunger*, "power," *deyntye*, "esteem," *helyng*, "protection," *rewarde*, "regard," *undedeleneſſe*, "immortality." There is, indeed, one apparently very modern word, in the extracts from *Qui Habitat*, which claims our attention: where the manuscripts collated by Björn Wallner read "morali and mistili," the editor has "morally and

¹ These are the titles normally given to Hilton's Commentaries. Cf. Björn Wallner, *An Exposition of Qui Habitat and Bonum Est*, Lund, Studies in English, XXIII (1954).

² A later annotator mentioned below, has given *The Scale* extracts the title "Of the Knowledge of Ourselves and of God," which could well serve as the name of the entire Florilegium.

mystically." However, there is little doubt that the editor is using "mystically," not in the sense in which we use it today, a sense generally rendered in medieval English by "contemplatively," but in its older sense as a synonym of "anagogically." Hilton is here speaking of the ascent of the mind to God through the various senses of Scripture—from the literal or historical meaning to the moral or tropological, and to the highest of all, the mystical or anagogical. It is likely enough that the editor here restores for us Hilton's original reading: that "mistili" is a corruption of "misticali." The language of the whole manuscript has one other characteristic which suggests that it is a copy of a fifteenth-century compilation, its consistency of dialect. The pieces in it are by at least two different authors, and though we have no means of knowing what were the dialect characteristics of the various manuscripts from which it was compiled, it is difficult to suppose that they did not exhibit marks of descent from the work of scribes of different regions of medieval England, where forms of English were spoken and written which varied markedly in vocabulary, inflexion and phonology. Such differences, however, have almost entirely disappeared in the *Florilegium*, which seems to have been copied from another manuscript which had been very carefully translated into the English spoken in the South-Eastern regions of the country, adjacent to London, in the mid-fifteenth century. Neither the extracts from *The Scale* nor those from Julian's *Revelations* show any notable dialectal difference from *Qui Habitat* or *Bonum Est*: and this strongly suggests that the editor was also responsible for this process of translation.

The manuscript contains many minor alterations and annotations which help us to conjecture what may have been its history after it was written. The originally blank portion of its last folio has been filled with pen-trials of a common kind, evidently notes made in the later sixteenth century for his will by a man named Lowe. That he used the manuscript for this purpose suggests that he did not value it. But later it would appear to have come into more careful hands. There are the emendations and annotations of three different writers, all of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, which show that they gave much careful study to the texts. The first annotator, who has only worked over those folios containing *Qui Habitat*, *Bonum Est* and *The Scale*, has been

concerned to clarify spellings or writings, to modernise archaic words or forms, and to give marginal notes indicating the main topics discussed. He has also supplied titles for the first three texts, which originally began with no indications of the names or authorship of the works used. *The Scale* he has called, f. 35^v, "Of the Knowledge of Ourselves and of God," and on f. 1^v he has entitled *Qui Habitat*, "An Exposition upon the 91st Psalm." His use here of the Authorised Version, not the Vulgate, number suggests that he was not a Catholic, but he makes none of the derogatory remarks with which careful Protestant owners of older pious literature so often decorated their margins. But the entire manuscript, including the extracts from Julian, has been furnished with other notes which, to judge by the frequency with which they refer either to the Vulgate text—"Scapula Domini," "Pennae Domini", "Cantare Domino"—or to Catholic doctrine or belief—"Eucharistia," "Mens, Ratio, Voluntas"—were not made by a Protestant.

In compiling his *Florilegium*, the editor had only one concern, one principle of selection: contemplative living. He shows no personal attachment to the authors of his originals: neither Walter Hilton nor Julian are once mentioned by name; anything remotely resembling biographical reference in the *Revelations* is omitted; there are no eulogies of any kind; and the titles of his originals, certainly current in the editor's day, are not given. Neither has he any interest in the literary qualities of his originals. His editorial competence is wholly in his handling of the matter; he is in no way concerned with form. The talents of Julian as a writer of prose are never allowed to affect his single-minded purpose: the vivid descriptions of her imaginative visions are irrelevant to him; he is intent only on her spiritual sights. When Hilton says, decoratively, that the words of Holy Scripture are the wings which carry up the soul from earthly to heavenly living, like the wings of a bird, the editor excises the simile, and leaves us with a jarring mixed metaphor: "if these words take true root in a humble soul, they carry it up into the air." He has no exegetical or theological axes to grind. When he omits the quaint (to our ears) commentary of Hilton on the snake and the basilisk of Psalm 90, it is not, one feels, that the editor regards the medieval exegesis as outmoded; it is merely that the remedies against the devil's temptations to heresy have no place in this

anthology on contemplation. The same is to be said of the current theological controversies which so interested Hilton and agitated Julian. Over half of *Bonum Est* is omitted altogether, though this includes an attack on intellectualism, still a controversial issue in the fifteenth century. Again, he is careful to include Hilton's statements that God's judgments of the reprovéd are revealed in a special manner to the soul endowed with the grace of Contemplation. Julian has much to say on this subject, which the editor omits: not because what she has to say is controversial, but because these judgments were never revealed to her. Nor is the *Florilegium* a "pious" book in the sense of presenting devotional and edifying extracts for spiritual reading and prayerful reflection. It is, of course, impossible to make a selection from the *Revelations* without reproducing at least some of the "comfortable words for Christ's lovers." But the editor is not thinking of comfort and consolation in the popular devotional sense. In his treatment of sensible consolation and of purely imaginative meditation he is as austere and uncompromising as St. John of the Cross.

The *Florilegium* begins with an abridged version of the Psalm which is the burden of the Church's liturgy for the first part of Lent. Interpreted spiritually, it demonstrates the ideal relationship between Christ and His true followers, the constant awareness which the chosen soul must have of the mutual love between God and itself, and of the demands made by that love. Hilton describes the attitude of the just man, who is also the wise man (in the medieval spiritual tradition, he who has become proficient in contemplative living), with his face towards his God, his back resolutely turned on the world. For this man, the initial stages of life in Christ are already over: he has experienced the second conversion, and the scales of sin and of the attractions of the world are already fallen from his eyes:

For when you are converted from the love of the world to the love of God, and when, through long practice in prayer and meditation, you feel your conscience greatly purified and at peace, through grace, from doubts and fears and all worldly desires . . . then you see with your eyes what God truly is.

This passage sets the tone of the *Florilegium* as a whole. Not only here, but in the rest of the book as well, the editor is anxious

that his authors should propound the various aspects of contemplative knowing: what the soul sees in contemplation, the "pure" prayer of the contemplative, the effects of contemplation in terms of the soul's growth and maturity, the specific contemplative virtues of purity of heart, humility, hope and love.

The focal point of the editor's version of *Bonum Est* is the remarkable description of the "Dark Night"—the extraordinary way in which Hilton anticipates St. John of the Cross:

And he will "show Your truth in the night." "Night" signifies adversity, and the lack of consolation, both material and spiritual, when it seems that grace is withdrawn and the soul left in darkness. But blessed is the man who has the courage to stay firmly where he is, in this darkness, showing God's justice, trusting well in Him, not poisoned by fears and doubts or any resentment against God. This is what the just man does; because when he is conscious that grace is in some way withdrawn, and he is deprived of devotion and compunction, when his sweet affections and his special consolations seem to be lost, and he is left as naked and poor as a man whom thieves have stripped down to his bare skin, when it seems as if God has forsaken him and forgotten him, still he does not turn back to the love of the world, for he cannot do this, and does not want to do it: he could find no pleasure there, no rest of heart. He is not angry with God, does not impute cruelty to Him; and he does not despair because of his own wickedness, for that is all forgiven. But he continues in this dark night, and he shows to the Lord the Lord's own truthfulness in perfect trust. And he thinks that it should be like this, here in this life, for this is truthfulness. He knows well that grace is withdrawn from him in one way, but it is given to him in another, as God wills—not so sweetly, not so perceptibly as it was given, but more secretly, more powerfully and more divinely. He is satisfied with things as they are; he would not have them otherwise, but just as God wills them to be.

There is much light in this night, but it does not shine. It will shine when the night is over and the broad day appears.

The editor includes this passage, not because it illustrates, from every point of view, all that is best in English fourteenth-century spiritual writing, but because a sound treatment of this subject is vital in any competent treatise on contemplation. All who advance in the contemplative way must pass through the night, and this extract maps out the journey. It is a classic instruction on the discernment of spirits at this particular juncture in the

contemplative life; it directs the contemplative in knowledge of himself in this particular facet of his relations with God.

"Of the knowledge of ourselves and of God" is the apt title chosen by the first annotator for the compilation from the *Scale of Perfection*. The editor sees to it that we understand that this knowledge is contemplative knowledge—illuminative and unitive:

... the soul sees God in understanding, so that it is comforted and illumined by the gift of the Holy Spirit, with a wonderful reverence and in secret, burning love, with spiritual savour and heavenly delight ...

a passive knowledge which is the possession of God:

... He gives Himself to us. We do nothing at all except passively receive Him and submit to Him. For the greatest act which we perform is to consent with our wills to receive Him, and to the workings of His grace within us.

It is a knowledge which

... is beyond all human knowledge and strength, all human achievement, and it is only made by the grace and light of the Holy Spirit in a humble soul.

It is a knowledge inextricably linked with love: it

does not come barely, blindly, tastelessly, like a scholar who can only see God by means of his theology, by exercising his reason ... but with a secret brimming love.

It is no surprise to find the editor bringing out the Dionysian strain in Hilton's mysticism:

I cannot recognise what You are in Yourself. There my sight fails, my knowledge and my reason are deficient, though they be helped by the light of grace. Lord God, the most that I can see and recognise of You is that I cannot comprehend. The better I see You through grace, the more unknown You are to me, and "the further You flee from me." But nevertheless, where the intellect misses love can aim well; and what I do not recognise, I love the best.

It has been said that *Bonum Est*, from which the above citation is drawn, is not by Hilton, because its author is following the Dionysian tradition.¹ But the editor of our *Florilegium* not only juxtaposes the two Psalm commentaries but demonstrates quite

¹ Wallner, *op. cit.*, p. xli.

firmly the uniformity of doctrine throughout the entire compilation.

In the excerpts from *The Scale*, as in those from the Psalm commentaries, there is a minimum of doctrinal exposition. With rare exceptions, the editor's version of *The Scale* is from *Scale* II, where Hilton is expressly concerned with "Reformation in feeling," the transformation effected in the soul by contemplative grace in the strict sense of the term, the effect of contemplative knowledge and love.

In his version of *Qui Habitat*, the editor cites Hilton as saying:

For though I may not and cannot tell you how God's lovers contemplate Him, this much I will say: the man who loves God, and has the eye of his soul purified by grace from all the filth of sins, contemplates God in spiritual excellence and with the sweetness of love. He sees our Lord God in His wonderful works, in his own soul's virtues, in the words of Holy Scripture which are revealed to his understanding [both] morally and mystically. He sees Him in the operations of the human soul and in the blessed nature of the angels; and, above all this, he sees a little the merest shadow, of God's own blessed nature.

All through the book, the editor is largely concerned with this aspect of contemplation, *what* it is that the contemplative sees in God; what is revealed to him. John of the Cross is similarly concerned, in the *Spiritual Canticle*,¹ to summarise the knowledge granted to the soul in the transforming union. Hilton summarises what he holds to be the content of the highest contemplative knowledge with these words:

And then there is revealed to the eye of the soul the unity of substance and the difference of Persons in the Blessed Trinity . . . and many other relevant truths concerning the Blessed Trinity.

Here the editor ends his version of *The Scale*, precisely because his compilation from the *Revelations* of Julian of Norwich represents a more profound exposition of contemplative knowledge; it gives a definitive shape to the editor's purpose, and a real justification to the title, "Of the knowledge of ourselves and of God."

He begins his version of the *Revelations* with a demonstration of the essential ideal attitude of the contemplative soul—Julian's spiritual sight of Our Lady's soul when she was con-

¹ Ed. Allison Peers (London 1934), Vol. II, p. 385.

fronted by the Angel Gabriel. Julian saw there the wisdom, truth and love which constitute the true knowledge of God, the contemplative awareness of the union of self who is nothing with God who is all. Looking at the *Revelations* through the editor's eyes, we see a carefully-woven pattern of strophe and antistrophe, a progressive knowledge in contemplation of the Divinity, one and three, with an equally progressive revelation of the soul to itself. Thus the revelation of the contemplative soul expressing the nature of its union with God, is followed by the shewing of the power, goodness and love of God in creation, conservation and special Providence: the consequent growth of the soul in contemplative humility and detachment: and again the nature of the union is given expression in the exquisite prayer, "God, in Your Goodness give Yourself to me."

God, in Your Goodness give Yourself to me.

You are enough for me, nor can I ask for less if

I am to pay full honour to You.

If I ask for anything less, I shall never be satisfied.

But only in You shall I have everything.

The editor is careful to give prominence to what Julian has to say about the relative value, in the contemplative context, of knowledge of self and knowledge of God: so that, as we read his version of the *Revelations*, we have the sense of listening to more satisfying, more harmonious variations on a theme already made familiar to us in the earlier part of the compilation. We next pass to the shewings of God in Christ the Redeemer and Saviour, and the consequent preoccupation of the contemplative soul with Christ's delight in its salvation. Julian's expressions of what a modern spiritual writer would classify as "Devotion to the Sacred Heart" are not introduced by the editor for their own sake, but because in the wound in Christ's side, in the heart of Christ "He revealed in part to the understanding the blessed Godhead"; an understanding which also reveals that the soul's holiness is achieved by "living with our Lord Jesus in loving prayer and tender longing." The final answer to the prayer, the fulfilment of the longing, is to "come to our Lord God with clear knowledge of ourselves and a full possession of God . . . hidden in God, seeing Him truly, experiencing Him fully . . . face to face, plainly and in full."

From the editorial point of view, Julian's comfortable words

on the Motherhood of God are cited as the precisest possible expression of the deeper understanding of "the unity of substance and the difference of persons in the Blessed Trinity," of a fresh and more penetrating light on the relationship of the contemplative soul with its Creator, Father and Lord. So he ends his version of the *Revelations* where he began: the wisdom, truth and love of the soul who possesses the loving awareness of Him "whose only care is for His child's safety." "He who lives in the help of the Highest, he shall dwell in the protection of the God of heaven."

The compilation, within its own narrow compass, is almost an unqualified success. One can read the extracts straight through, without being aware that the book is a patchwork. It is true that occasionally, in the extracts from the *Revelations*, the transition from one to another is not always smooth: it is a little disconcerting suddenly to read: "and in the ninth revelation our Lord God said," when there has been no previous numerical reference. But, in the main, only the reader who is already acquainted with the *Revelations* will notice that the editor is not concerned to disguise his transitions.

- A reviewer might describe the Florilegium as "very useful for the *ex professo* contemplative, definitely not for the beginner." The editor himself is either an *ex professo* contemplative, or at least an advanced student of mystical theology. He tampers with his texts very rarely, and some of his readings, from the point of view of theological sense, are an improvement on his originals, at least in the form in which we now have them.

- The Florilegium has several singularities, which raise some speculative problems. It is singular, in the context of its time, not only by the precise and narrow definition of its aim, but also in its sources. Florilegia of spiritual treatises are, of course, common enough at this date. But it is rare to come across a manuscript of any fourteenth-century English spiritual work which is not bound together with other treatises; rarer still perhaps, to find a Florilegium of this period which does not contain or draw from a Latin treatise. Our manuscript has no Latin at all, apart from the very occasional verse from the Latin Vulgate in *The Scale* extracts. One is tempted to argue that the compilation was made for a reader or readers who knew no Latin. The editor's obviously deep acquaintance with Mystical Theology

makes it likely that he was a priest; or at least a cleric with a good grasp of theology, and some Latin—otherwise he would not have bothered to reproduce (accurately) the Vulgate citations, especially as an English rendering is always appended. The fact that he does not cite the Latin of the Psalms in the two commentaries (as the other manuscripts invariably do) may support the conjecture that the reader for whom it was intended knew no Latin. One might also argue that this reader must also have been an *ex professo* contemplative. The editor avoids all didactic passages, and the more elementary instructional and hortatory matter in which *Scale I* abounds.

It may be asked why the editor did not include extracts from *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the other treatises attributed to the author of *The Cloud*, particularly the *Epistle of Privy Counselling* and the *Epistle of Prayer*; for all these treatises touch the editor's subject-matter closely. The answer may be that the extraordinary method of contemplative prayer (or perhaps we should say the description of the method) advocated in *The Cloud* would have cut across our editor's purpose. Certainly in *The Cloud* itself, *ex hypothesi*, the author has little or nothing to say of contemplative knowledge of God; and what he has to say of the knowledge of the soul he says in common with Hilton, and not quite so succinctly. It would be a much more difficult task to choose passages from *The Cloud*, or even from *Privy Counselling*, to match the editor's other extracts. One of the merits of the *Florilegium* is that it demonstrates the doctrinal and terminological inter-dependence of Walter Hilton and Julian of Norwich.

Perhaps the most puzzling question of all is what happened to this kind of writing in sixteenth-century England. Such minor mystical treatises as the commentaries upon *Qui Habitat* and *Bonum Est* are sometimes found in manuscript anthologies of scriptural commentaries owned by the laity, but in general it is probably true to say that Hilton and Julian, together with the other great medieval English mystical writers, were not known or studied outside the contemplative cloister. Even among contemplatives, there were indications that these older spiritual classics were losing popularity. Partly, this may have been because their language was found to be obsolescent and difficult: and the modernisations and the misunderstandings to be observed in the *Florilegium* are witness to the probability of this. A similar trend

is to be seen outside England, in Germany and the Netherlands, for instance; and this may also account for the numerous Latin translations of vernacular treatises which were being made in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries—one remembers such translators as Richard Methley at Mount Grace, and Lawrence Surius in Cologne. But it is also true that newer fashions in contemplative thought and teaching were beginning to prevail, and a demand for such works was being created which only newer writers could satisfy. We know that the calibre of St. Thomas More's spirituality owes much to the writings of Hilton, and that this may be explained by More's close contacts with the London Charterhouse; yet at the same time we also know from that other great martyr for the Faith, Blessed John Houghton, that he and his Carthusian brethren were zealous in their quest for recent Continental spiritual works, and that they complained that such books were bought up and disappeared from the market as fast as they were imported.¹ The dissolution of the monasteries and the establishment overseas of English seminaries appears to have completed this process. In the next generation, we can see clearly from Mush's contemporary Life of Blessed Margaret Clitherow that she was an advanced contemplative, but her spiritual reading was "imported"—the *Imitation of Christ* and Fr. Perin's *Exercises*.² And when Augustine Baker attempted to revive the study and use of the older English spiritual classics, this was in the relative peace and security of contemplative houses overseas. Yet if there ever were any feeling among the persecuted English Catholics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that the literature of medieval English piety had no part to play; had, indeed, played no part in the Church's witness against heresy and schism, such a view would have been most unjust to the English mystics, and most of all to Hilton and Julian.

¹ Margaret Thompson, *The Carthusian Order in England* (London, 1930), pp. 329-30.

² *Spiritual Exercises of William Perin, O.P.*, ed. Kirchberger (Blackfriars Publications, London, 1957). The inspiration of Fr. Perin's work was the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola—also the inspiration of *Persons' Christian Directory*, and the devotional writings of Blessed Robert Southwell.

NOTE.—A modernised version of the Westminster manuscript, together with this Introduction is to be published by Mowbrays in their *Fleur de Lys* series next year.

REVIEWS

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Death and the Right Hand, by Robert Hertz. Translated by Rodney and Claudia Needham (Cohen and West 18s).

WE SUGGEST that Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard's Introduction should be read first, then the two essays, and then once more the Introduction. In this way we would be helped to see Hertz in perspective, which is the more important since this extremely industrious disciple of Durkheim was killed in 1915 aged only thirty-three. He had proposed to write a book on *Sin and Expiation in Primitive Societies*. Meanwhile he had wisely concentrated on one section of the human race, the Dayaks of Borneo, and had even learnt their language. He would then feel safer when studying the customs of the various peoples of Indonesia, and safest of all if he confined himself to one subject, here, the reburial of the dead after a certain interval. A rich variety of ritual surrounds a central conviction that the dead are not immediately fully dead, whatever be the state into which they ultimately pass. *Vita mutatur, non tollitur*. This belief explains all manner of derivatives, such as the non-announcement of a ruler's death, why widows cannot forthwith inherit or remarry, and so forth. So far as this group, then, is concerned, we may decide that practices derive from ideas and values and not vice versa. The idea may well be discovered by us only at the end of our research, though it came first in governing the material discovered. (Not that it may not be useful to start from a hypothesis, provided one is ready to rectify or alter it according as further evidence turns up.)

The second essay, dealing with the origins of the fact that most people are right-handed, carries less conviction. It may well be that no importance should be attached to an asymmetry between the lobes of the brain: but it appears that an almost mystical value is not always attached by primitive peoples to the right hand. Amid the multitude of notes appended to this twenty-four-page essay, we have observed at least one which is inaccurate. It is meant to support the view that blood extracted from the left of the body is destructive, from the right, regenerative, and states that "the wounds of the crucified Christ are always on his right side." But this is not correct. Since there is no historical evidence, we have to appeal to tradition and the imaginative visions of the Mystics. They have not always seen the wound (there was only one) in the right side, any more than they agree about the number of nails, or the shape of the Cross. M. Hertz invokes a collective consciousness, in which the duality of the human structure results in the

categories of sacred and profane being applied to right and left, so that experience reinforces the development of the right. But even so, we do not see why collective consciousness (and what exactly does that mean?) should have fastened the sense of sacred to the right, and the right hand in particular. The whole of the body is interiorly asymmetric. But this essay is very interesting and indeed, intriguing. Professor Evans-Pritchard, Professor of Social Anthropology at Oxford, hopes that more discussions of "a particular topic" which illustrates a "common point of view," essays that have "a close theoretical relationship" will become possible simultaneously in England and the United States. Meanwhile, his warnings against hasty generalising, drawing instances to suit one's theories, and his guarded approval of what is probable but not certain, should be valuable to all students.

C. C. MARTINDALE

VOX POPULI

Free Speech in the Church, by Karl Rahner, S.J. (Sheed and Ward 4s).

THE PUBLICATION of this essay constitutes in itself a refutation of the charge of totalitarianism brought so often by the unthinking against the Catholic Church. No totalitarian régime would ever allow such a document to be published, for it is of the essence of this type of government to make of the enforced submission of the subject a substitute for love and freedom. As a result, public opinion is replaced by the continual blast of government propaganda. Not so with the Church. Public opinion is essential for her vitality and the right of her members to free speech derives from this need. Fr. Rahner's point is neatly made. He enlarges on it with frankness: "If they (the clergy) do not allow the people to speak their minds, do not, in more dignified language, encourage or even tolerate, with courage and forbearance and even a certain optimism free from anxiety, the growth of a public opinion within the Church, they run the risk of directing her from a soundproof ivory tower, instead of straining their ears to catch the voice of God, which can also be audible within the clamour of the times."

In the end most secular dictatorships rot from the head down because, almost inevitably, the dictator reaches the point where he recognises the validity of no other opinion except his own. Once this occurs, his régime is set for decay. This cannot happen with the hierarchical government of the Church. Quite apart from the essential point of her continued reception of vitality from the indwelling of the Spirit of God, we notice Fr. Rahner's supplementary observation, which is that the Church's wise recognition of her need to take account

of public opinion formed amongst her members enables her to place her effort within a contemporary setting and, therefore, in a way which is ever new. This is her great achievement. Perpetually criticised as old-fashioned, unprogressive and out of tune with the times, the Catholic Church stands, at the end of two thousand years, in the full bloom of her youth.

The twin of this essay, in the same slight volume, is entitled "The Prospect for Christianity." It, too, is of great value and written not merely with insight, but with strong compassion and Christian hope.

PAUL CRANE

NAPOLEON III

The Second Empire, by G. P. Gooch (Longmans 30s).

THIS IS NOT a re-telling of the story of the Second Empire, but an appraisal by a distinguished historian of some of the leading figures that composed it. One has become so well accustomed to the partisan approach in books of this sort, and not least in works on this particular subject, that the fairness shown by Dr. Gooch in his assessment of the various personalities in question deserves the highest commendation. Where else, for example, is a good word to be found for that egregious figure Plon Plon, a thorn in the side of every historian of the period as he was in his cousin's régime? Yet here he emerges as one who was his own worst enemy, a pitiful rather than an evil character. Nor, I am thankful to say, are we asked to take the windy declarations of the great Victor Hugo at his own valuation, but are referred merely to the "almost pathological hatred" which the poet had for the Emperor. But after all it was Anatole France who summed up that torrent of invective in one icy phrase: *Il faut bien reconnaître qu'il a remué plus de mots que d'idées*. Whenever the Devil's Advocate is necessary the services of the dyspeptic M. Viel Castel are called upon, who when it comes to derogation of character whether of male or female can always be counted upon to deliver the goods. But the Second Empire was Napoleon III, and it is to his portrait and that of the Empress that one turns in the first place. Of the Empress, Dr. Gooch says she was "the least sensual of women and the most passionate of politicians." This is at any rate a far juster assessment than that of Lord Cowley, an unpleasantly prejudiced witness, whom he also quotes. The portrait of the Emperor as here drawn, and he is a man who has suffered much at the hands of biographers, is an admirable one. It is a curious thing about Napoleon III that although many of the qualities he possessed were more English than French, yet he was never really accepted by the English, who persisted throughout his reign to regard him with suspicion. This was due to various reasons: to the fact that

he appeared to be an enemy to the English conception of democracy, to the fact that he never looked like the great gentleman he really was, to the ancestral suspicions evoked by his name, and because he was a man who believed in something with single-minded and fanatical devotion. The fact that this belief was only in himself and his own destiny is neither here nor there. To the English any form of fanatical belief, especially if it finds expression, is an indication of lunacy. He was a crackpot adventurer, and a crackpot adventurer in English eyes, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, he remained to the end. And yet it was precisely those English qualities of his, his taciturnity, his invariable politeness, his good-humoured tolerance, that baffled his French subjects. So it was that from neither side did his more notable attributes gain him any credit. Dr. Gooch tells the story of the Emperor's cousin, Prince Jerome, once reproaching him with having nothing about him of the great Napoleon and receiving the crushing reply: "I have the faith."

He was a man of faith and held to it so firmly that it even moved mountains of a sort. But naturally, having no better foundation than himself, it failed him in the end. And the last state, it could assuredly be said of him, was worse than the first. But let not his essential goodness be forgotten. When he was a prisoner in Germany, when the very ends of the world had come upon him and he was at the nadir of his fortunes, he received a letter from one of his former Ministers, a Monsieur Magne. The letter ran as follows:

"Sire, I beg you to accept in evil days this mark of sympathy and attachment from an old servant whom in happier times you overwhelmed with kindness. I read in the papers that Your Majesty has made no financial arrangements for himself, and I believe it is true for I know your disinterestedness. In 1860 you presented me with a house in Paris. Please, Sire, regard this property as yours and make use of it as you will."

The Emperor refused the gift. But only a good man could have inspired so noble and touching a tribute.

JOHN MCEWEN

UNRAVELLING RAVEL

Ravel: Life and Works, by Rollo H. Myers (Duckworth 30s).

FEW COMPOSERS are more characteristic of French musical traditions than Ravel. Yet there was nothing of the chauvinist in him—Mr. Myers goes so far as to describe him as a polyglot—as a mere glance through the titles of some of his works reveals: *Shéhérazade*, *Chansons Hébraïques*, *Chansons Madécasses*, *Tzigane*, *Rapsodie Espagnole*, *La Valse* (whose original title, *Wien*, is even more explicit).

Superficially there was a curious refusal in Ravel to betray himself in his music: he had to assume a role, though he played it faultlessly. His sources of inspiration are not only exotic but almost invariably second-hand (it is interesting to note that he collected fake works of art). He sees the Greece of Daphnis and Chloe, for example, through the eyes of eighteenth-century painters, his Orient through the *Arabian Nights*. The accusation of artificiality was often levelled at him in his life-time. And Mr. Myers adds that "he approached his art from outside, as it were, self-consciously and at the same time objectively. He deliberately refrained, in fact, from trying to express himself." One is reminded of a poet whom Ravel greatly admired: Baudelaire. Indeed, the attitude is not uncommon in the history of French art, and, if it precludes the highest ecstasies, in the same moment it makes possible an exquisitely calculated precision of beauty.

But too much emphasis on this characteristic of Ravel's work can lead to a misunderstanding of him, in much the same way that a greater composer, Couperin, is often misunderstood. Mr. Myers has tried "to discover to what extent the music of Maurice Ravel can be said to represent the integral man" (the phrase is Stravinsky's), to explain the profound paradox of Ravel's comment on his critics, "How do they know that I am not artificial by nature?" If, in terms of facts and figures, this is not a book which adds significantly to our knowledge of Ravel, it is nevertheless a sympathetic study which will lead to a better appreciation of him as an artist. To this extent it must also lead to a better understanding of the music, though it must be admitted that the author does not pursue his promising path very far. When it comes to particular scores his comment is too often restricted to mere description and statistics.

Perhaps he has attempted too much. The compact "life and works" approach to great composers continues to be an irresistible temptation to authors, publishers and, one imagines, readers, in spite of the fact that an enormous output in this field has produced scarcely a handful of real successes. That this book is not among them does not diminish its considerable achievement.

ERIC TAYLOR

SHORTER NOTICES

The Faith of a Physicist, by H. E. Huntley (Geoffrey Bles 16s).

THE MAIN THEME of this book is that God reveals Himself to the scientist through the material world. A new scientific insight, like that of evolution, is characterised by its supernatural ingenuity; it neatly

explains what was previously obscure, and gives intellectual satisfaction and aesthetic pleasure. It can come suddenly to the scientist when he is least expecting it, so that it seems to be a new revelation, and not something he could have imagined on his own.

Through long familiarity with the works of God the scientist comes to know the characteristic Style of the Creator, and tends to apply his knowledge in other circumstances. Thus he instinctively rejects the separate special creation of the biological species, not because he can strictly prove it wrong, but because it is so contrary to what he knows is God's way of acting.

The faith of the physicist is in the uniformity of nature, and the confident expectation that new revelation will continue in the same style. Professor Huntley rightly distinguishes this faith from the Christian Faith, but shows that Christianity made science possible by creating the conditions needed for its growth. This fulfils the promise of Our Lord that material prosperity (brought by science) would come to us if we first sought the Kingdom of God. This view of science has educational implications, and Professor Huntley shows how many, though not all, of the aims of education can be achieved through the study of science.

His discussion of the compatibility of science and religion would have been more interesting if he had said what he understands by revealed religion. His only reference to the authority of the Church is superficial, yet it is here that real problems could arise.

Most Christians will welcome this analysis of science, but it must be admitted that it would mean very little to most scientists. Wrapped up in the problem of the moment, unlikely ever to make a "revealing" discovery, we tend to take a less comprehensive view. If we cannot understand anything, we get down to the hard and laborious task of chipping away our ignorance. Few have the time or temperament to write poetry about it or to indulge in wonder and awe.

The Life and Opinions of Thomas Ernest Hulme, by A. R. Jones (Gollancz 25s).

THE FIRST PART of this book contains an account of Hulme's life and of his philosophical, aesthetic and social opinions. Mr. Jones, who is a lecturer on English language and literature at the University of Hull, is not concerned with inflating Hulme's importance as a thinker or with disguising his shortcomings as a man. At the same time his book is not an essay in debunking. He gives little reason for supposing, as some like to suppose, that Hulme would have exercised a profound influence on British philosophy, had he not been killed in the First World War. But he shows how Hulme's aesthetic theories, largely derived from Germany, were of importance as providing a

theoretical background for contemporary geometrical art. The picture of Hulme which emerges from Mr. Jones's biography will scarcely prove attractive to all readers, but he must have been a remarkable man to achieve the position which he won for himself in the intellectual life of London. There was no very obvious reason why the young man from Staffordshire should come at once to the fore. As Mr. Jones remarks, it was sheer force of personality which did the trick.

In the second part of his book Mr. Jones brings together Hulme's extant verse. He also prints two letters and two articles, "A Personal Impression of Bergson" and "A Tory Philosophy." Incidentally it is amusing to read that when, during Hulme's second and very brief flirtation with Cambridge, it became known that he was translating Bergson into English, a member of St. John's College wrote to the *Cambridge Magazine* to protest against the name of the college being associated with the translation of writings which could not add to its reputation "wherever sound philosophy is held in esteem." One could hardly wish for a better example of intellectual stuffiness.

Christian Education in a Secular Society, by W. R. Niblett (Oxford University Press 12s 6d).

The Catholic Dimension in Higher Education, by J. G. Lawler (Newman \$3.95).

ACCORDING to Professor Lawler, we must discover and affirm the "ontological radication of the Christian intellectual life . . . in the essential nature of God's universe." We are not sure what he means; but we are inclined to cheer—not solely because of the nightmares his sentence will inflict upon certain of the linguistic philosophers but even more for the exuberance and confidence it expresses. These qualities are manifest on every page of this long essay on the spirit that should inform Catholic Higher Education; and they prompt him to come out on the side of the Teilhard de Chardins and Emmanuel Mouniers rather than on the side of those who are constantly harking back to the closed, cloistered world they imagine to have existed in the Middle Ages. The reverse aspect of his exuberance, it is true, leads him to pen one of the crassest judgments imaginable on Hopkins's later years, but one forgives him this for such inspired common sense as this: "if you put a good teacher in the company of good students you will have a good school whether the programme be based on the *De Magistro*, the *Ratio Studiorum*, or *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding*."

Professor Niblett's book is a great contrast; based on the work of a committee which was sponsored by the Institute of Christian Education it is an eminently balanced and fair summary of the sort of

problems that face Christian teachers trying conscientiously to apply the 1944 Education Act in the state schools. But it is a tired book, and one must confess that the solutions it proposes are tired compromises such as the following: "Perhaps prayers should be made in the name of Christ—'through Jesus Christ Our Lord'—rather than to Him." Compared with such intellectual hesitations even the financial complications of Catholic schools seem a light burden.

The Captain with the Whiskers, by Benedict Kiely (Methuen 16s).

IN THIS NOVEL the author provides extremely well-drawn characters, excellent humour, very good description of people and places, and spoils the story of five children brought up by a domestic tyrant with the amount of mental refuse with which he endows many of his characters. Some might call it realism, perhaps it is, but realism can be achieved without the smell of the garbage-can. Much of the blasphemy, perhaps it is only near-blasphemy, could have been avoided without doing harm to the story. The omission might make the book worth reading. Much of the book sounds like the case-histories of patients suffering from spiritual indigestion.

Could it be that the writer missed the point of the story? Could it be that the missionary spirit lives in the author and, like another St. Patrick, he has set out to convert the savage Irish nation? St. Patrick was somewhat less crude!

The Eye and the Heart, by Carlo Coccioli, translated by Bernard Frechtman (Heinemann 18s).

IT IS POSSIBLE to approach this book as a novel, or as the incarnation of a problem: the problem itself can be regarded either as chiefly psychological, or, as by the author, in the long run theological. The former approach is difficult because M. Coccioli keeps interrupting a young Italian painter, Fabrizio Lupo, who comes to tell him his story, and allusions are made to earlier novels which one is supposed to have read, and I have not. As the book advances, Lupo's intense emotions seem to me to become hysterical. At times one would say that separate pages had been stitched together haphazard. A half-fable, half-illusion about a child intrudes upon perhaps more than half of the straightforward story; possibly the child represents the innocence Fabrizio felt to be really his. The story concerns the fierce homosexual love of Lupo for a young French sculptor, Laurent, who returns it, though at the end with a divided allegiance: *nec tecum nec sine te*. With it runs the secondary and complementary theme of love-death. The physiological-psychological problem of the origins of homosexuality, is unresolved. The theological problem, moreover, is a false one; Fabrizio thinks that the Church holds his *disposition* as such to be guilty, and regards

the Church as having no room for him because he is refused absolution and is determined to persist in his practices. The story ends with Laurent's death in a motor-accident, and Fabrizio's suicide. The book is violent but not provocative. We cannot but think that Fabrizio is rather stupid, or else he would certainly have found a confessor both uncompromising and sympathetic. How many insist on declaring themselves right in the sight of God when offending against the Faith they profess to hold!

The Foxglove Saga, by Auberon Waugh (Chapman and Hall 15s).

AUBERON WAUGH has written a very striking first novel. It is crowded with a great variety of comic incident, but there are nevertheless undertones of disillusionment. The book covers the lives of three characters in school and the army, gives a glimpse of their more or less shady and unsuccessful careers and then rather summarily dismisses them. The most developed comic character is Lady Foxglove, the arch-hypocrite, with her expensive odour of sanctity scent, her nightly tipple of Lourdes water and her habit of totting up the works of mercy she has inflicted on others during the day, and ticking them off in her *aide-mémoire*. The Misses Umbrage, champions of the rights of kiddies and doggies, soldiers, policemen, East End landladies and the occupants of a nursing home for eccentrics are all cartoon characters, funny, but also stupid or nasty. Most savagely caricatured are the monks of Cleeve, Martin Foxglove's school.

The book is extremely readable and competently written. It contains no character which holds the reader's sympathy throughout the narrative. None of the principal characters is likeable. When Martin Foxglove is fully revealed near the end of the book, he is seen to be depraved by his mother's hypocrisy; the unlovely Kenneth Stoa, though slightly pathetic, is thoroughly nasty to the end.

Auberon Waugh's taste for satirising the less endearing side of human nature culminates in the curious figure of Tarquin, the red-bearded baby. The comic and horrific account of his life reminds one strongly of the Goon show. There are some exceptionally good moments in the course of the book, but it ends on a characteristic note of bitterness.

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